



**Department of
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News Release

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VA Secretary and New York City Mayor Team-Up to Battle Obesity, Diabetes

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today joined forces with New York City to slim down veterans and stamp out diabetes.

In a joint appearance with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, VA Secretary R. James Nicholson warned veterans of the risks of diabetes and obesity, and provided details of a new VA initiative to fight the ailments.

"Inactive lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits can cause needless suffering for America's veterans," said Nicholson in New York City. "Obesity and diabetes are major threats to the health and lifestyles of our veterans, and we've engaged in a robust effort to better educate them on healthy habits."

Veterans receiving care in the VA system are more likely to have diabetes, one of the major complications associated with being overweight. According to the American Diabetes Association, seven percent of the U.S. population has diabetes, and the rate increases with age. Among veterans receiving VA health care, who are on average older than the general population, the rate is 20 percent.

Noting the high incidence of diabetes in New York City, Nicholson highlighted how the VA's new campaign, "HealthierUS Veterans," can play a part in educating New Yorkers about ways to lower the risk of diabetes and obesity, and applauded Bloomberg's commitment to fighting diabetes.

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Obesity, Diabetes 2/2/2/2

“Diabetes is one of the great threats to New York’s public health,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “I’m proud to partner with Secretary Nicholson and the VA on this education program to reach out to our veterans and give them the information they need to protect themselves, their families and communities from this dreaded disease.”

HealthierUS Veterans is a multi-faceted initiative that includes collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and encourages veterans to improve their diet and level of physical activity. Elements of the campaign includes a Body Mass Index check and a customized “Prescription for Health,” devised to provide an appropriate exercise and diet regimen that matches each patient’s specific needs.

With obesity and deadly diabetes at significantly higher levels among America's veterans, VA recently announced a coordinated campaign to educate veterans and their families about ways to combat these health issues.

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